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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Countering the KGB

Nicholas Daniloff divulged a remarkable piece of information in his press conference on his arrival at Dulles. He said that Gennadi Zakharov is "a professional spy, who was a KGB line officer, a lieutenant colonel who is running four operations simultaneously." We don't know how Mr. Daniloff learned these details, but we're sure he didn't make them up.

So Zakharov was most likely not some "small-fry spy," as some administration sources have described him in press reports. Instead, he was apparently the most dangerous kind of agent. Mr. Daniloff's remarks suggest that when Zakharov got that package on the subway platform in Queens, he wasn't acting as a simple courier; he was checking on one of his moles, recruits who get jobs in industry and government that are valuable to the Soviets. The Whitworth and Walker trials show how successful these operations have been.

The White House may have minimized Zakharov's importance lest its political implications make even more dreadful the spectacle of trading the guilty for the innocent—giving up a spy for Yuri Orlov and his wife—and a promise to meet in Reykjavik.

The value of the deal aside, downplaying the issue of Soviet espionage is a mistake. Very likely, the entire Daniloff affair was not just to free one of the KGB's own, but to stymie the first strong counterattack against Soviet espionage in many years.

U.S. counterintelligence estimates that there are 1,200 Soviet bloc spies operating from New York to the Silicon Valley. They monitor phone calls, of grain companies and banks, for example. President Reagan said in a radio address last year that "we need a balance between the size of the Soviet diplomatic presence in the U.S. and the U.S. presence in the Soviet Union."

The first skirmish of this battle was at the U.N. The FBI says that of the more than 1,000 Soviet-bloc nationals at the U.N., 400 are full-time spies. Last March, the U.S. demanded that the Soviet, Ukrainian and Byelorussian missions shrink by one-third. Within two years, they are supposed to be cut to 170 from 275, still a huge representation.

The spies who remain are among the most valuable KGB and GRU (Soviet military intelligence) agents. Our sources tell us that Valery Savchenko is the KGB station chief at the U.N. and Vladislav Skvortysov is the top GRU official at the U.N. The rest are yuppie types, who speak perfect English and wear Calvins. The U.S. purposely left off the list the old baggy pants and fedora hat crowd because they are seen as a lesser threat.

Other allies have joined in this effort. Last year, a French intelligence sting operation discovered how the Kremlin devised a crash program in the early 1970s to keep up with the West. The Soviet Military Industrial Commission was created, made up of the Council of Ministers, Foreign Trade Ministry, KGB and GRU. The French report said the Soviets were getting 10,000 pieces of equipment and 100,000 documents yearly from the West, mostly from the U.S. Pelf has included computer soft- and hardware, and entire weapons systems.

The U.S. had set a deadline of last Wednesday for the 25 top Soviet spies at the U.N. to go home. The Soviets now have Zakharov back; the remaining issue is whether George Shultz has already blinked and the dozen or so other named Soviet agents still in New York can stay. "They asked for a grace period, and the president granted it," Mr. Shultz said. "We will discuss further this whole issue of the U.N. mission and its use, no doubt, in Reykjavik."

It is not clear why the White House blinked on the Wednesday deadline. Secretary Shultz reportedly told his colleagues that Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze assured him these were diplomats, not spies. Mr. Shultz may be playing his own game here, but the 25 names were carefully chosen. Expulsion lists aren't delivered to foreign consulates every day.

Ever since Dzerzhinsky kept Lenin on top of the masses, secret operations and active measures have been central to Soviet policy. At first, the KGB spent its time building the totalitarian state. It still guards the border to keep the people in. Today's spies rob or cheat to make up for the Soviets' endemic technological backwardness.

Against this backdrop, the Soviets want to talk about arms control at Reykjavik. Fine. Item one of President Reagan's agenda should be expulsion of the Soviet front line troops operating in the U.S. itself.

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